



**DELHI UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY**

**SV-1982**

## DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Cl. No. 0:1459:1

Ac. No. 11,496

Date of release for loan

29 JAN 1963

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below. An overdue charge of 06 nP. will be charged for each day the book is kept overtime.

[illegible]



MY COUNTRY



# MY COUNTRY



BY RUSSELL W. DAVENPORT



NEW YORK 1944

SIMON AND SCHUSTER

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
INCLUDING THE RIGHT OF REPRODUCTION  
IN WHOLE OR IN PART IN ANY FORM

---

COPYRIGHT, 1944  
BY RUSSELL W. DAVENPORT  
PUBLISHED BY SIMON AND SCHUSTER, INC  
ROCKEFELLER CENTER, 1230 SIXTH AVENUE,  
NEW YORK 20, N Y

SECOND PRINTING

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

This song belongs to my mother  
Cornelia Whipple Davenport  
who taught me to cherish freedom





# MY COUNTRY

## ·I·

AMERICA is not a land of ease.  
We have not paused from action to beget  
Heroic simile and song and frieze;  
We have no empire of the mind as yet,  
Nor have we shed our light within the grave:  
But, as the sons of enterprise and sweat,  
Honor the quick, the strong, the free, the brave—  
The mind whose thoughts are cradled in the hand—  
The fierce emancipators of the slave  
Exacting destiny of virgin land.  
We are the builders of dynamic things,  
Successors to the spires of Samarkand—  
Boilers and bars, propellers, wheels and wings  
To run and fly and dive at our behest,  
Through which the mighty wind of freedom sings.  
America is not a land of rest.

None is released, as lover in the night,  
 Upon the mystic cadence of her breast,  
 Whether as paramour or parasite,  
 Or has of her the Lotus-wine of sleep;  
 For only in the day does she delight,  
 The open eyes, the heart unsatisfied,  
 The urge to risk, to fabricate, to reap—  
 And windy prairielands, horizon-wide,  
 And cloudy streams from which the salmon leap.  
 We are the men of motion and desire,  
 Spirits that seek, engender, and collide  
 Like atoms of regenerating fire:  
 The western men who must forever be  
 Consumed in deeds, to which their souls aspire;  
 The bright, creative fuel of destiny  
 That burns in action as in ecstasy.

America is generous to the free:  
 To those who ask no favor of the great,  
 And grant them none, except equality;  
 The masters, not the minions, of the state:  
 To him who gives no margin to the snob,

But thinks and breathes as freedom's delegate  
 Against the fashion or the gathering mob.  
 All tongues and races are American,  
 All nations are embodied in her job,  
 To breed the noble concept of a man  
 Whose freedom is, that others should be free—  
 Yellow or black or red or white or tan.  
 This was the burden of the prophecy,  
 When from the wharves of Boston, and the whips,  
 There rose the blessed words of liberty  
 Upon the rebel pens and patriot lips:  
 And she was ever generous to those  
 Who saw her first as promise from the ships,  
 The empty-handed and condemned, who chose  
 To risk the towering glamor of her shore;  
 Italians, Slavs, and Jews, the "dese and dose"  
 Who came with song and fiddle and guitar;  
 And those of Spain and Crete and Singapore  
 In pants of blue and shawls of cinnabar;  
 And those of Ayr and Cork; and those who bore  
 In them the scars of Pinsk and Bucharest,  
 The dusty orts of kaiser, king, and czar,  
 Which still she gathered to her mighty breast:

Whereon the light of liberty sufficed  
 To make their hidden splendor manifest—  
 And every jewel among them equal-priced  
 By her own law, as in the Word of Christ.

My country loves the lovers of her land:  
 They who in Spring behind the heavy plows  
 Rip up the sterile project Winter planned;  
 When brooks are like extended veins, and sloughs  
 Have soaked the feet of every shivering hill,  
 And in the April sunlight Winter's cows  
 Crop the intoxicating chlorophyll:  
 They who endure the agony, who share  
 The lustful intumescence of the Will  
 To wake the larvae and enchant the fair  
 And wistful flowers from the dark, and call  
 The butterflies into the dusty air  
 And orange honeysuckle from the wall;  
 And the muscled Will of pregnancy to squeeze  
 From deep and planetary silence, all  
 That life has yet conceived, or can increase;  
 To load the land with hay and golden grain

And vines and heavy corn and calves and pease,  
In light as hot as liquor in the brain,  
In August when the sun goes down so late;  
And willow trees, reflective and sedate,  
And crimson apples like the dreams of gain:  
Or yet those others, restless ones, who boast  
Some secret kinship with the course of fate,  
Who haunt the hills with Summer's screaming ghost  
When the New England trees disintegrate  
Like incantations chanted to the frost,  
And all the jewelry of her land is lost,  
Of which in summertime she was so fond,  
And carried outward on the beat of drums—  
The wings of wild geese far above the pond.  
These men she loves: and those who see beyond  
The blindness of the earth when Winter comes,  
When all the house is cluttered with its gear  
And children squirm and struggle with their sums  
Year after year  
Beside the fire that hisses as its goes;  
The lean, far-sighted countrymen who hear  
The breath of living things beneath the snows,  
And feel the hope of Heaven in their blood,

And far below the frost, the glowing Rose.  
*The earthy men are those*  
Who have America to love and keep:  
Her mountaintops, her daring clouds that scud  
Above the dappled carpets that we reap;  
Her rain, her snow, her forest-fire, her flood,  
Her dusty winds, her tidal hurricanes,  
Her desert buttes, her lakes, blue-eyed and deep,  
Her foaming rocks and shores, her silver veins.  
These are her men, to whom she will confide  
The secret of the seed that she contains,  
Which has so generously multiplied  
Within the fertile pastures of her creed;  
The seed of liberty, which can provide,  
Out of the dark and frozen depths of need,  
The love of man, the Flower of the freed.

Yet freedom is no life  
Of elegance and graceful mood:  
The breed of freedom is a breed of strife,  
Restless and rude,  
Reared to the earthy struggle of its time.

Only the thought of freedom is sublime,  
 Its flesh is knit of discord and of feud  
 Among a people hardened by their skills:  
 Of racket, labor riot, sex, and crime,  
 The dark, glimmering clash of wills—  
 Colliding waves      destroyer of itself:

The ruse  
                          the squint  
                                  the insolent drawing  
 Eye to eye  
                          a pistol on a shelf:

The thing that looks  
                                  that horrifies  
    that kills

In hate  
                          in Hagerstown and Pawling:

The pulsing focus of the soul      the self  
 The self is freedom  
                          ever-lustful  
                                  brawling:

Exponent of the struggle for survival  
 The conqueror of beast      by beast      by beast  
 Wary      rapacious      rampant      and salival  
 Through the forgotten forests of the East:



This brute, this mammaled memory of the sea,  
 Evolving in the frenzy of the chase,  
 In drums and bloody dances 'round the priest,  
 In spoilage, in conquest, race by race;  
 This self in search of its entelechy,  
 With all the jungle written in its face:  
 This is the thing America makes free.

And there are the clean muscles also; the bright  
 Clean wings of transports leaping from the field;  
 The hard, clean fight  
 Of men well matched and angry for the right;  
 The clean, transparent power of a wheel  
 Driven by the invisible and profound;  
 The sound  
 Of rivet-hammers hitting the clean steel  
 Dominantly, in the high naves  
 Of yards where the red ships are keeled;  
 The clean click of the drives  
 Over the bright green fairways, after work;  
 The clean girls laughing on the merry-go-round  
 And through the park . . .  
 The evident, the positive, the seen,

The bright, the clear, the hard, the diamond-ground,  
The clean—

Such is the will of those who struggle here  
In mind and muscle, motion and machine:  
Lawyer and carpenter and engineer,  
Bricklayer, seamstress, bolter, go-between,  
The salesman and the beautiful cashier;  
The zealous people avid to pursue  
The protean American Career;  
The lovers of the daring and the new—  
Competitive, impacked and numberless:  
The apostles of American success,  
The priests of the Pursuit of Happiness.

Yet to what purpose freed?

By what mutations

To reach what ultimate

to fill what need?

By what light to proceed?

What intimations?

What answers give

to the beast enfranchised?

Questions

and questions

and speculations

For which we are not yet experienced

Not yet American-ripe      not positive:

Only we feel the urge we live

Only living  
feeling that we live

Here with a Constitution we devised

For the aspiring the competitive:

And if there is some magic in our land,

As on Darien surmised:

Some distant purpose hidden in the hand,

Some ultimate fulfillment of the free

Beyond collision and rapacity—

It is that there incarnates in the beast

A Spirit native to the universe,

Which by our signature we have released,

Beyond recall, from human custody:

That we endure no bondage to rehearse

The mummary of autocrat or priest,

And so have liberated from the curse

Of servitude, as from the thrall of sin,

The glowing seed of God that lives within.

Strong men these are, whose hearts can never rest;  
Forever ending, only to begin;  
Forever moving on the trackless quest  
Of what forever is, yet cannot be:  
Forever turned to face the arduous West—  
The dream of progress to infinity—  
The eternal destination of the free.

## ·II·

AND yet it is not clear      not clear      not clear  
Darkness is all around us      and the cries  
Of dying men      and fear      and other fear:  
The fear of eyes staring at other eyes,  
Of eyes that stare at nothing to be seen,  
Or at Nothing in disguise—  
Pumpkins in the dark of Hallowe'en:  
The Jewish threat      the Catholic      the Black  
Bureaucrat      labor leader      pacifist  
Tycoon      appeaser      egomaniac  
And nihilist—  
The fears that flourish in the other fears  
Hammer-and-sickle      swastika      fascine  
And Hitler . . .  
Yes, there are things to fear  
(But let us fear the ones that there are  
To fear  
    let us fear  
            only in freedom's name) . . .

Fear the image of man in steel and motion  
 The iron image      the carborundum  
 Image      the hope of man      in aluminum  
 The dream in cement of man with electric thoughts  
 The copper nerves      the brass guts      the bars  
 Impassioned as men are      the wheels turning  
 Like the thoughts of men      and the fires      and the white pig  
 Spouting from the bellies      and the red blooms  
 Rolled and rerolled      longer and longer  
 To the shape of a man's ambition . . .

There is this blind thing,  
 There is this thing grown  
 Out of us—this thing:  
 Thing of energy,  
 Thing of steel, of speed—  
 Blind—infinately  
 Strong and swift and blind:  
 Not God's thing, not God's  
 Thing, but man's—man's thing:  
 Thing without soul—the  
 Dead thing living—thing  
 Evolving out of

The beast-flesh without  
The soul of the beast:  
The huge thing that moves,  
The thing that moves all,  
That moves always and  
All together in  
Unison always:  
The thing without breath  
Without eyes without  
Ears without sleep—life  
Without life or death:  
This is the lathe turning,  
This is the drill, this is  
The planer planing, this  
The jig, the dictator,  
The indispensable;  
This is the cutter cutting,  
This is the feeder feeding,  
This is the gear-box, this is  
The slab-cutter, this is the  
Go-gauge and this the Not-go:  
This is the micrometer to  
One-thousandth, this is the Vernier

To the ten-thousandth, these are the  
 Drop forgings for the heart—the dead heart:  
 These are the substances of the dead—  
 The living dead, the animated dead,  
 The nickel steel dead, the chrome steel dead, the  
 Hard steel dead, the carbide, the cobalt :  
 The “high-shock, fatigue-resisting” never-tired  
 Dead thing created in the image of man.  
 No never tired

never tired  
 never tired . . .

The bright machines  
 the lovely

Bright incredible machines:

The goddesses of mind  
 of space and time

The turning goddesses  
 the heartless

Goddesses  
 the living-dead  
 the breathless goddesses:

These are the vampire goddesses  
 the vampires

The glistening destroyers  
 the revolving



Goddesses

the heartless goddesses

The lovely goddesses

the bright incredible

Machines . . .

Living in motion to destroy the living:

Living among the living without God.

Let us not fear Man: let us fear

Only what he believes in.

The red dirt falls over Birmingham, on the houses

Where the niggers lie in the darkness

waiting for freedom:

And the workers of Pontiac and the River Rouge

wait for the

Clear vision:

and in Manhattan they climb

The stairs in the evening

seeking it

and the elevators

Slide up and down behind the lights

sighing

And the people in them sigh

for the lost dream.

Have we found it in Chicago by the blue lake?

Have we found it where the streets run interminably  
Through the passions of man

or on the flats

Where the monsters are that consume the remains  
Of another age?

Or on the infinite stoops of

West Philadelphia

have we found it?

Or under the unseeing sky of Boston

or over

The gutted hills of Butte

or the teeming hills

Of Seattle :

the vision

the dream of a new freedom?

Or have we

Found it in the promised land, the far country

Where the rivers used to wind through the hills

like lovers?

Youghiogeny      Monongahela      Ohio.

But the hills are dead now and the slag spewed

Into the valleys where the reeds were and the willows,

And the rivers are empty of fish and their desire is

For Nothing:

and the dream has gone out of this land

And the houses cling to the dead hills as children  
To the memory of God . . .

O my country,

It is Nothing that we must fear: the thought of Nothing:  
The sound of Nothing in our hearts  
like the hideous scream  
Of fire-engines in the streets at midnight:  
The belief in Nothing.  
Here are the signs of Nothing and the portents,  
Where the machines are, and their priests  
and their prophets:  
Where the fire is, and only  
Fire: and cinders and only cinders:  
And the voices rising up from the cities, where  
The people are—but only voices . . .

Let us search, then:  
Let us search in the void where God is  
(If anywhere): let us search in the blackness:  
Search the universes beyond the universe,  
And the atoms within us and the forces  
Within the atoms: give us instruments,  
Give us tools—the bright, arcane  
Tools of the mind: the wires, the beams of light,

The tubes, electrons, needles, particles,  
 Waves, grids, condensers, slides, and super-film:  
 Maybe we can find God now  
 With the electronic microscope  
 In the invisibly intimate; or maybe  
 In the stars with a colossal  
 Telescope in California:  
 Give us theodolites and spectroscopes,  
 Telepolariscopes and ammeters  
 And gyroscopes and galvanometers  
 And polarimeters and chronographs:  
 Give us all—everything that weighs  
 Or measures, everything that compares,  
 Posits, checks, balances, responds:  
 Everything that can refract or bend;  
 Everything that can reflect, transpose,  
 Compute, divide, react, and segregate:  
 Let them be infinitely accurate,  
 Let them be infinitely sensitive—  
 Lest we fail  
                     lest somehow we miss it  
 Lest we miss God  
                     fail to see Him  
 Fail to weigh Him  
                     fail to measure Him

Fail to probe where He is:

fail

### To probe beyond Nothing:

fail to find

## Anything beyond Nothing

anything where

God is

Where God is . . .

where God is . . .

Oh, the instruments:

Oh, the bright tools made

Of mind—the new mind—

**Mind extended:**

Mind of measurement,

Mind of steel, of glass—

## Blind—infinately

**Intricate and blind:**

Not God's mind, not God's

Mind, but man's—man's mind—

## Metal mind without

Eyes—the fireless mind—

The dead mind of the

Living—mind of death:

These are the extensions  
 Created without soul  
 By the beast, created  
 Of the beast, for the beast,  
 In the hands of the beast:  
 Inanimate extensions  
 Of the beast—extensions of  
 Man the ever-extending,  
 The evolving-in-water  
 Through-the-air on-earth under  
 Above around by over  
 Across with of into and  
 In the infinitely finite:  
 Unknown and relative to the  
 Unknown and relative to the  
 Related and still relative  
 To the unrelated, the presumed . . .  
 (Oh, where is the presumed?  
 Oh, where is  
 The uncreated place?)  
 Where is God?  
 Where is He?  
 Where?  
 Where?

Not in the instruments :

not in

The telescopes

the microscopes

The spectroscopes

the chromatometers

The calorimeters

the carbonometers

Not in these

Oh

not in these reflections

These rediscoveries of ourselves within

The instruments

ourselves

In the extension of ourselves:

No

not

In these encounters with ourselves

beyond

Ourselves

the meeting of the mind

beyond

The mind

the meeting of ourselves

beyond

Where the mind is

in darkness

where

We are  
                   in Nothing  
                                   rediscovered  
 By Nothing  
                   in the blackness  
                                   of Nothing  
 To believe in Nothing  
                                   to be Nothing  
   Nothing  
 Nothing . . .

We have found Nothing:  
 We have seen it, have  
 Seen Nothing—the face  
 Of Nothing—we know  
 Nothing, we have heard  
 Nothing, heard it rant,  
 Heard it proclaim the  
 New Order of Hate,  
 The Godless Order:  
 The radio face  
 In the darkness of hate  
 Where man ends who  
 Is without freedom,



Is the machine-man,  
The instrument-man,  
The automatic  
Man without soul—where  
Man is without God:  
Not God's face, not God's  
Face, but man's—man's face,  
The man-face without  
Love, the machine-face  
The instrument-face  
Without faith without  
Hope—man-face without  
Christ, the Anti-Christ:  
These are the Poles dying,  
These are the Czechs, these are  
The dead Jews, these the  
French running, these the  
Fair cities of Holland  
Burning, these the British  
Driven into the sea:  
These are the Yugoslavs  
Crushed, these the Greeks starving,  
These the Russians falling

In snow by the million

Before the machine-face:

These are the shattering bombs,

These the women, the wailing

Babies, the timbers falling,

Roofs spouting, stone walls crumbling,

Glass crashing, bodies flying,

Beds, rags, running feet, fire,

Water, blood

silence:

and the burnt

Faces—and the dawn—the gray dawn

Moving into the desolate cities

Moving into the desolate streets and

Over the hearts of people looking over

The people over the looking people for

People in silence lost and forever buried

Under the buildings

under the Nothing.

This is the face—

this—

now we have seen it

Now we have seen the face

looked into the eyes:

[ 26 ]

Now we know what fear is  
what the price is

What pain is  
what fear is

What hate is  
what blood is

What fear is  
what death is:

Now we know that it hurts  
that freedom hurts

Oh, God it hurts  
O God  
It hurts buddy

Oh, Christ save me  
Oh, help

Oh, Jesus  
This is more than I can take

O Christ  
O God . . .  
O Jesus . . .

# • III •

*Here lies an American soldier:  
He is dead.*

*There is no blood in his hollow cheek,  
In his twisted hand there is no nerve,  
He is dead.*

*Who among us will speak for this man,  
Who will say what there is to be said?  
Who will set forth what the dead deserve  
Concerning the dead?*

*It is not easy for us to speak:  
In the empty heart there is no song,  
There is no light in the eyeless head:  
There are no words in a cynic world  
To honor the dead.*

*Among his countrymen who will speak?  
Who will say what there is to be said  
In behalf of the dead?*

HIS SISTER SPEAKS:

"When Pop got the telegram he didn't know what to do.

It was just after noon and Pop had come in to wash up for dinner and Mom was in the kitchen and she hollered to Pop to answer the door and it was the telegram.

I was standing there in the hall and I watched him read it and then I watched him just stand there:

He didn't know what to do.

Then he kind of crumbled it in his hand and he turned with his head bowed and put one foot on the stairs and held on to the banister:

And then he just went upstairs, slow, like a great weight, and then I thought I knew what it was and I was scared and began to cry:

But I didn't know what to do, either.

So I just stood there: and then without thinking I ran up the stairs after Pop and went right in:

And Pop was sitting there on the edge of the bed with his knees spread wide apart and his hands holding on to the edge and the telegram crunched up under one hand:

And he looked at me when I came in—he just looked. And then he said, 'Hello, Sis . . . Hello, Kid,' he said.

He didn't know what to do.

'Is it—?' I said. 'Is it—?' And he just nodded his head slow and held out the telegram and I took it.

But I couldn't read it. I just saw 'Adjutant General' and then I saw backward until I saw 'KILLED IN ACTION':

Then I couldn't see anything at all.

'We've got to tell Mom,' Pop said. 'We've got to tell Mom.'

And I thought, 'Poor Pop—poor old Pop.' And then I thought, 'Gee, he wants me to help him. He didn't say "I," he said "we." He wants me to help him.'

But I didn't know what to do.

So I just turned and looked out the window down the valley toward where the river goes into the willows:

And I saw our pasture, where it comes down out of the woodlot, and I saw our meadow as bright green as May in the sun:

And I looked at the stone wall that Larry had fixed when he was a kid and the stile he'd made so's Mom could get to the orchard easy:

And I looked down through the window of the shed and I saw Larry's motorcycle propped up and the sun was shining on it through the window:

And the breeze came in from around the back of the house and I smelled the blossoms of the old crabapple the way it was when we were kids and used to pretend it was jasmine:



Wired, propelled, lighted, electronized  
To see in the dark of the earth, hear in the silence,  
Measure and weigh and touch the unattained.  
This is the vision of man as superman,  
Stretched to the great horizons of the mind.  
But what have we had of this? The dream  
Has ended in horror: the hope falls  
With our sons on the acrid battlefields of the world.  
There is a Shape within,  
A howling Shape of sheds and smoking-pits,  
A blind and monstrous Image of ourselves,  
Faithless to all and ignorant of love.  
This is the kinematic golden calf,  
In whose obedience we have created hell  
More terrible on the face of the earth than that  
Which was presumed to await us in the grave;  
Wherein the power of every evil is raised  
By engines and designs to higher powers,  
And the warm flesh, in our bewildered lives,  
Becomes the agent of Satanic appetites—  
Rage, hate, slaughter—mass-produced,  
Many-levered and malevolent—  
Pregnant with wars that are, and are to be.



Oh, it is in us, the evil!  
 In us the evil grew—engendered  
 Evil behind the pious and empty mask  
 Of pacifism and hypocrisy.  
 Where was America, in the name of God,  
 When all the broken-hearted world was waiting  
 For us to act? We could have risen then:  
 Risen against ravishment and theft  
 In China and Ethiopia—murder  
 In Spain—doubt in the sad, shaken streets—  
 Passions oozing from Berlin—lies,  
 Cynic insolence, disclosures, hate—  
 Betrayal of honor, contract, law, justice,  
 Free speech, and peace.  
 We could have risen: yet we did not rise.  
 We were neutral!—  
 Neutral with the light on our faces  
 Of bonfires burning up our destiny:  
 Neutral to torture, murder, rape; neutral  
 As death toward our deluded sons  
 Who fell in the tangled gullies of the Argonne,  
 Of whom we did not ask neutrality.  
 They lie there now, betrayed, under crosses

Emblazoned with names from Pennsylvania,  
Kentucky, Maine, California—  
Danish and Italian boys—Irish—Armenian—  
Our boys, thrust from all around the earth  
Into those cemeteries, where, instead of freedom,  
Their monument was the German infantry.  
We did not end their war.  
We failed to make their peace, or in their name  
To rebuild the ruined prospects of mankind:  
Failed to prevent the re-engendering  
Of hate and horror—even to prepare—  
Even to face our own necessities.  
We did nothing. We were neutral. No—  
We would rather be pushed around by bastards  
From Tokyo and Berlin, and have our flag  
Smeared by the spittle of our conquerors,  
Our boys captured, starved, dismembered,  
Our islands overpowered, our creed of freedom  
Prostituted in the alleys of the mind;  
And suffer all the indignities of men  
Without the will to be what they believe—  
Rather all this, than to arise in time  
Against our known and natural enemies.

And now we have one cry—the ancient cry:  
 More boys—more boys—more boys!  
 Throw them against the beaches! Hurl them  
 Into the reckless ruins of Italy!  
 Let them be blown to bits by bombs and rockets,  
 Submerged in the sea and frozen in the ice,  
 Their eyes lost, their legs, their testicles;  
 Their lives scrambled and their hopes deferred:  
 And all for us, whose greed and cowardice  
 Nourished the human monsters that they fight.  
 More boys—more boys—more boys!

How should we speak of death, except as death?  
 Where is the light of love and resurrection?  
 Our gods are stolen from the depths of matter,  
 And they have led us into the desolate country,  
 They have betrayed us into the wasted land.  
 How should we illuminate—  
 How resurrect  
 Truth from the empty skulls strewn along  
 The riverbeds of the past, which have no water?  
 Sister of death, weep: weep for your soldier.  
 There is nothing else to do, nothing to be said.

The sun is on our land, but nothing grows.  
 The bones of Christ are scattered across the rocks.  
 The rocks are marked with the feet of other ages.  
 God is not anywhere. And the springs of love  
 Are empty . . .

*But here an American soldier  
 Is lying dead.*

*There is no blood in the hollow cheek,  
 There is no light in the darkened nerve,  
 Or in the head.*

*Is there none in our midst who can speak?—  
 None to say what there is to be said?  
 None to set forth what the dead deserve  
 Concerning the dead?*

*Lest he lie forever, killed in vain,  
 Lost in the dust of the wasted land,  
 Dead as the shape of his hollow cheek,  
 Oh, speak, countrymen! . . . .  
 Speak!*

HIS TEACHER SPEAKS:

"There is almost nothing I can say . . .

A memorial service will be held at the Presbyterian Church next Sunday: the whole school will attend.

I suggest also that those of you who knew him, write to his parents and his sister . . . any little word . . .

Of course there is nothing that anyone can say . . .

But before placing this first gold star on our school service flag perhaps it is fitting to remind ourselves:

To remind ourselves of Larry in action, for he loved action;

To remind ourselves of Larry on the football field; for there he was at home.

I do not know how he was killed: but I think of him as thrusting forward, as on our Memorial Field,

I think of him as thrusting forward with that amazing confidence of his; I think that is the way it must have been, giving everything he had:

He was a very generous boy.

And for my part I want to say that I believe that Larry died for a reason, that he died for a cause:

I believe that he died for freedom.

I don't mean that he was thinking about freedom—I doubt if he was thinking about anything except the enemy.

And I am sure that if ever he thought about freedom

out there in the foxholes it was never the way we learn about freedom here in books.

When he thought about freedom he thought about you sitting here, his friends;

He thought about our town, and the life we lead here, and the fun we have, and the good things we have to eat, and the bright hopes that we all share:

These, I am sure, were Larry's idea of freedom.

But as his former teacher I want to point out that this life of ours, this free life, is not the result of accident.

Freedom as we live it here in America is an inheritance from ages past;

Freedom is a spark, whose origin is lost in ancient times;

A spark that was nourished in Athens, in the Acropolis, in the debates of those days and the productions of the immortal philosophers and dramatists;

A spark that was fanned to flame in Galilee by Him who announced the great and single law of freedom, that men should love each other.

Thereafter this flame survived through dark and dangerous centuries,

And emerged in England, where common men like you and me learned how to assert their rights against the power of kings:

And from England this flame was carried across the

Atlantic and lighted in the great, dark forests of the  
New World.

And so it was by no mere accident that Larry was  
called to go out and fight against the declared  
enemies of freedom:

He fought, not just to avenge Pearl Harbor, not just  
for our security, and not for conquest:

He fought for all that has been gained since men  
began to record their history—

For all that has been gained, and all that can be  
gained, and all that will be gained.

He fought that you whose lives still lie before you may  
have a chance to carry forward,

To carry forward in your lives those long and  
illustrious gains—

Those gains which men with freedom in their hearts  
have made against the enemies of man and the  
enemies of God.

Larry has passed you the ball. Don't let him down!

Take it! Press it to you! Advance it! Run with it!

He was—a generous boy. . . .”

O land of freedom! Spacious hope of man!

Where are the brave, God-given words that woke

The shadowy wilderness to liberty?

Where is that common faith of which we built,

Here on the broad foundation of your shores,  
 A temple for a human brotherhood?  
 It was the land which taught us to be free—  
 The unexpected land that broke the spell  
 Of Europe on the crowded hearts of men.  
 For when that stubborn Genoese set sail  
 From Palos in the glassy dawn, he reached  
 For empire, in the name of Aragon,  
 Unknowing that there lay ahead of him  
 The hills and valleys of a greater reach  
 Across the ocean of humanity.  
 “*Tierra! Tierra!*”—none knew what it meant:  
 The hidden thought of freedom, leading us  
 Up the seductive streams to breed our hopes,  
 And from the Appalachians stretching out,  
 Always as land, more hopeful, more desired,  
 Into the brooding Mississippi plain  
 Where the tracks were of Spaniards and of French;  
 And on into the country of the sage,  
 And through the yellow desert and the thirst,  
 To stand at last upon the western range  
 And see that other ocean opening out,  
 As blue as heaven, to the unfortold.



All this we freed: to any man the price  
Was only his own courage. And thus the land,  
Which hitherto had imprisoned men, became  
The school for freedom, where we learned in action  
The principles and the million rules that knit  
The life of liberty: to keep the doors  
Safe from authority, the churches free,  
The village greens at peace, the chosen corners  
Open for gossip or for diatribe:  
And learned to print what we believe, and change  
Our minds, and equally maintain another's  
Right to be mistaken and his chance  
To advocate that which we know is false:  
And learned the lean, imperishable truths  
Of imperfection; that freedom is designed  
To fit the hearts of men, and not of gods;  
That justice is uncertain in its course,  
And mercy blind, and wisdom too obscure  
To earn for any citizen the right  
Of undebated power: and learned, therefore,  
To check the would-be saviours and the terms  
Of officers, however strong or good.  
So from the massive freedom of the land

There grew the massive doctrine of the free,  
 That truth in men is relative to truth  
 In other men : and no one owns the source  
 Of that which lights the cities of the mind.

And now the earth is tested, and its peoples  
 Everywhere: in tiny, ravished Europe,  
 Or the clear, green hills of Szechwan :  
 And on the crowded Indus, and along  
 The tundra shores of unfrequented seas;  
 The test is here; in noisy Mediterranean  
 Alleys, and down the Congo where the drums  
 Beat out the news of armies from the West;  
 And on the palmed Australian isles, and in  
 The proud, uncertain lands of Bolivar.  
 This is the age of which the prophets tell:  
 In every sea, on every continent  
 The time has come for freedom—or for death.  
 O mighty land! Awaken in our hearts  
 The ancient Spirit, now relaxed in sleep,  
 Of Liberty, which once inspired our lives:  
 That we may rise from our enchanted soil  
 Against the unnatural powers of our time,

And with candescent policies, apply—  
 Wherever on the earth our name is known—  
 The universal lessons that we learned  
 In this majestic and abundant school:  
 The principles, the rights, the obligations,  
 The deep and holy structure of our law  
 Beyond the reach of mere majorities.  
 These are like water hidden in the hills—  
 The eternal springs of liberty, whose source,  
 Though lost beneath the deserts of our time,  
 Might yet be redivined and opened up  
 And sluiced into the future of the world.

*But here lies on the alien shore  
 An American soldier.*

*He lies in the darkness of the dead;  
 He lies in a grave beyond the latch  
 Of a secret door.*

*Who can see what there is to be seen?  
 Who can say what there is to be said?  
 Who can compose a last dispatch  
 From the alien shore?*

*None of us here in his home can speak,  
And none who have known him heretofore:  
There is no faith in our hearts, to catch  
The knob of the door.*

*Who is there living among the dead  
To open a crack and tell us more?  
Who will bring word of our soldier son  
From the alien shore?*

*Speak, countryman, speak,  
And open the door!*

#### HIS BUDDY SPEAKS:

"It might just as well have been me.

We're all huddled there under the bank that rises up  
from the beach to where the bastards're waitin' for  
us;

And they have an emplacement up there and they're  
pottin' us with a coupla mortars;

And the Louie says, 'For Crissake we gotta get them  
sons of bitches outa there. We'll just die like pigs,  
here,' he says. 'Who'll go up and get 'em?'

So Larry steps up and he says, 'I will, sir.' And be-  
cause I always went with Larry, I said I would too.

But I'm scared. No kiddin'.

So we climb that there bank.

I ain't never stood naked on Main Street, but that's the way I feel up there, except it's lead comin' at you instead of just people starin';

And I guess it's right there I make up my mind I'm gonna get it, because it's easier that way than tryin' to expect to live in all that lead.

Anyways, Larry starts like he's gonna take on the whole goddam army:

He must be six or eight yards ahead of me and I see him take a grenade, and I see his arm go back to throw it:

Then it's the damnedest thing I ever felt.

I see that grenade lobbin' through the air, and I see Larry fall, like he didn't have any legs. He just falls.

But I swear to God I don't know whether it's him or me that's hit. It might just as well have been me. Anyways, I fall, too.

I don't remember nothin' then:

I must've chucked all my pineapples because when the Louie comes up he says, 'Fine work, Carlson,' he says, 'nice job.'

I'm kneelin' there beside Larry, lookin' at his face, and when the Louie says that it hits me hard;

Because when I hear the Louie use my name like that, then I know I'm alive:

And I look down to Larry, and then I know he's dead, not me; and I just put my head down onto his chest and blubber like a goddam kid.

I've thought about it in the night a lot of times. It might just as well have been me.

Nobody'll ever take away that feelin' I had about Larry when I got mixed up;

And for my money that's what the chaplain was talkin' about before we got into them lousy barges: I never seen it so clear before, and I guess I never will again.

And ever since then I've had an idea: I guess maybe I'm a bit off my nut, the way you get, but the idea keeps comin' back and comin' back, and I wish I could express it.

The idea is that when I got mixed up that way between Larry and myself—well, that's the goddam way it is;

And the idea is that if you could see it that way all the time, mixed up like that, the world would be a hell of a lot different—

That's the idea.

But you gotta look at it a long time, like it is when a flare falls in the night: you have to wait.

And I guess I won't ever be able to express it very well . . .

All I can say is there's somethin' we don't see most of the time, except in times like that: I know it like I'm sittin' here—

Because it might just as well have been me."

On the shore where the stiff white crosses mark  
a design for eternity,  
And the infantry of sleep is forever enrolled in silence,  
And the lives of men are but numbers, and an alien wind  
Comes up to the beaches, caressing  
The fallen sons of men of a distant country:  
Here, at last, the meaning and truth of freedom  
Opens, unsealed, before the eyes of the nations;  
Where death has merged the memories  
of Maine and Nebraska,  
Of Indian fires in the desert, of bearded live-oaks,  
The motion of Texas grass when the wind is moving,  
The dusty roads that lead to the schools and churches.  
Here they merge like a stream—ranches and orchards,  
Courthouses, banks, shops, railroads, and factories,  
Memories of faces, of lips parted with passion,  
Of hands like sunlight on the nerves, of hair fallen  
Over the shoulders of someone beyond the ocean.

Here in the name of freedom all have been gathered  
 Into the perfect union of purposes disunited—  
 A brotherhood of men in the arms of death  
 Who were never aware, in life, that they were brothers.  
 Read the unsealed message, you who desire freedom—  
 You millions and millions who struggle against each other!  
 Open these graves to discover  
 The secret of liberty shoveled under the earth:  
 Behind the curtain of flesh, as under the crosses,  
 There is one Brother of all; and all are One.

As in the night,  
 When a new wind rises out of the hills of America,  
 The odors of the land are released from secret places  
 And mists are pulled from the valleys and serious stars  
 Assemble, as if elected  
 To represent above us the thought of freedom;  
 So now, out of the graves,  
 The boys return to our hearts, like shadows of ourselves;  
 They are shaped into life again, as moonlight is shaped  
 By the magic trunks of the white-oaks in tangled woodlots—  
 Changed as the moonlight is by the brooks into silver,  
 To reinhabit the land where they cannot live.



Now in the brotherhood of the dead we can see  
All who have known her well, all who have loved her,  
Who are with her no more in the shape  
                                of their hands or their faces,  
But are in us forever a part of her being:  
Trappers and tillers, workers, dim representatives,  
Heroes who died for the living, who lived for the dying;  
Men of Lexington, Yorktown, Lake Erie, and the Alamo,  
Sheridan's riders and Roosevelt's, statesmen and presidents;  
Souls of the opening West, of deeds and visions,  
Of ships and spars, cities and turbulent markets,  
Of hot desires—dreamers—creators of the future—  
Lovers of American sunshine, American shadow.  
All of them—all—are forever enwrapped in our will,  
Deathless voters, unburied voices of freedom,  
Invisible leaders, teachers of new generations,  
The living saviors within us—the American dead.  
Here in ourselves they exist, here they are carried  
*Downward into the darkness of lost horizons—*  
Or onward into the infinite vision of man.  
Let us live, therefore, in the name of those who have fallen,  
That in our lives they may be resurrected:  
Let us search for the light by which to find them

Within ourselves and in one another . . .

Let us uncover the graves . . . Let us pray . . .

Bright, but secret, Brother of mankind,

Whom we imagined in the reckless void;

Here in the broken bodies of our sons

We see at last what was invisible—

The remaining hope that animates the world,

The brotherhood of all men, everywhere.

This is Your Being, Your eternal Self,

Your Presence in our hearts—a meeting ground,

Wherefore so dimly lit we cannot know,

But absolute when we discover it—

The place of brotherhood, where we must walk

Fearlessly, in the darkness of the mind.

Here freedom had its origin, and here,

If anywhere, freedom will be preserved

Upon the earth, for us or other men.

It is the test of freedom in our time

To know this place and keep it for the world.

Spirit of Man: Founder of Liberty:

Great light for which democracy exists!

America is the land that You have loved:  
On us the burden falls to lead the nations  
Out of this frightful wilderness of steel;  
On us depends the course of that which is  
To come hereafter—whether freedom was  
A stolen dream from Heaven, or is the truth  
On which to found the future of mankind.  
Brother of all races and all creeds!  
If there is anything that we can do,  
Now let us do it! If there is any price  
That will repurchase from the hungry past  
The honor of our dead, let us pay it now!  
If, by resolution, we who live  
Can reinspire the faint and mangled truths  
Of human liberty, let us henceforth  
Be as resolved and desperate in our course  
As the immense and undeflected stars  
That travel down the channels of Your Will!  
And if, within the ancient universe,  
There yet remains one spark of charity,  
Brother, give us that spark, that by its light  
We may reread the chapter of our time,  
And from this flickering chronicle relearn  
The truths that might have been self-evident.

## ·IV·

THE Spirit moves us onward. None may rest.  
Thought presses thought: we were not born to wait.  
The future crowds the ever-opening gate  
Of time, and is possessed  
And written in the histories of men.  
The rising generations are impressed  
For service in the hidden and untried;  
And each, by deed or word, by gun or pen,  
Must venture, must decide,  
For good or evil, what is destiny.  
We cannot wait—in this we are not free.  
The Spirit flows within us like a tide  
Upon a nameless sea,  
Pulled onward by some moon we cannot know  
To inundate some shore that cannot be;  
Some country out of mind, beyond surmise,  
Beyond the reach of sine or ratio,  
Or touch or taste or smell, or ears or eyes;  
Some truth we cannot dream or analyze,  
Forever hidden from intelligence,

Of which our will is yet the embryo.  
 We cannot hold this tide. It drives us on.  
 It drives us ever hence,  
 To war and devastation more intense  
 Where man will fight his own automaton;  
 Or else, to that which waits within the heart,  
 Still uncomposed in time, still unordained—  
 The brotherhood of man—the Oregon  
 Of freedom won by industry and art,  
 By science brought to life, by law maintained.

My country will be generous to the bold:  
 To those who do not fear the dangerous thrust  
 Of progress toward the far and unfortold,  
 But know that like a promise freedom must  
 Lie forward of the darkness, not behind,  
 And know the Brother in their hearts, and trust  
 This Light at last to liberate mankind.  
 If they who search the void with telescopes  
 Can see this Light, whatever else they find;  
 If in the mazes of the isotopes  
 Where life itself lies just beyond the view,  
 Or in the magic genes, where science gropes

For the control of eye and hair and hue—  
If everywhere we search immensity  
We know that God is in us, and is true,  
However dimly: then we shall be free.  
Then will the myth of Nothing abdicate,  
So that our works and sciences may be  
The servants, not the masters, of our fate—  
The lenses, not the shutters, of our light.  
Then will our instruments illuminate,  
And not reflect, the specters of the night,  
And we shall find that which has lived unseen  
In all men always—yellow, black, or white—  
The shape of love, the mystic Nazarene  
Who walks upon the waters of the soul.  
Then will the thrust of engine and machine,  
The energy of river, oil, and coal,  
The clever spindles and the spiraled gears,  
The switches, valves, and throttles that control  
Titanic voltages and atmospheres—  
All this expanse of energy and plan—  
Stretch out before us, like the old frontiers,  
To use and master in the name of man.  
Freedom must generate in progress—this

Is what it means to be American.  
The vision that the world is waiting is  
The same that traced its way in wagon-tracks  
Across empurpled plain and precipice,  
And whispered in the starlit tamaracks  
Where travelers told of freedom in the West  
Around the fires of hopeful bivouacs:  
The vision of a mighty purpose, pressed  
By all the peoples of the earth, to make  
The hidden truth within them manifest:  
And as this continent was free to take,  
And thus awoke the hope of all mankind,  
So now, in hope, we hear the future break  
On the unsovereigned beaches of the mind.  
From science there is liberty to win:  
The liberty of vision for the blind;  
The liberty of ray and vitamin  
And serum—drugs to break the peonage  
To pain—and plasma and penicillin  
And antitoxin and bacteriophage:  
The secret properties of gland and cell,  
The seeds and shadows of another age.  
And liberty rings also like a bell,

Still distantly, but with familiar strain,  
Where science gropes through atoms to compel  
Their service as conveyers of the brain,  
Or breaks the prison bars of time and space  
With supersonic rocket, shell, and plane,  
Or blasts electrons from their ordered place  
In the interstices of destiny.  
Here is a mighty continent, to face,  
To open, to develop, and to free,  
The virgin country of the intellect,  
The far and many-tongued fraternity:  
Which men of other times could not expect  
This side of myth, or Milton's shadowy eyes,  
But now is ours to open and project  
In mountainous shapes that men can recognize  
Along the shorelines of the possible.  
This is the land of those who utilize  
The love that acts within them like the pull  
Of star to star, planet to satellite;  
The love of man to man, the powerful,  
The mystic source of freedom's every right,  
Which signals across bloody battlefields  
For us the weary peoples to unite.



It is no easy shore. Adventure yields  
 To mockery, which arms the prejudiced;  
 To wealth and all the power that it wields;  
 To cynic, misanthrope, and atheist:  
 They will not know the truth who cannot bear  
 The pain of love, nor will their deeds persist,  
 Nor will their standard, lifted anywhere,  
 Protect the earth from bloody dreams of hate:  
 But only those with courage to prepare  
 The chamber of the heart will celebrate  
 The wedding-day of truth and liberty.  
 This is the needle's eye, the narrow gate,  
 That leads beyond the horizons that we see,  
 To what has never been, but yet will be.

My country loves the lovers of her flag:  
 The strong, oracular emblem of her will—  
 The spangled cloth of peace—the bloody rag  
 Above embattled gulch and smoking hill,  
 Like freedom nailed in pain against the sky.  
 O flag, most beautiful, most versatile  
 Of all the banners men have lifted high,  
 Bright promise which the winds articulate,

Great seal of freedom, raised to certify  
That man is fit to love and liberate!  
Spread over us the shadow of your bars,  
Projected from the authors of our state,  
The red for courage like the heart of Mars,  
The white between the red for liberty;  
And shed the light of multiplying stars  
Out of the blue, majestic mystery  
Of union under God, across the earth—  
The blue of Heaven, which is loyalty.  
Whatever we are worth, this flag is worth.  
Whatever we may dare to dream, or do,  
We live in it, as it in us, from birth:  
Our will is cast in red and white and blue.  
Let us not make of it, for bargainers,  
A rich and unregenerate parvenu  
Among the empires and their connoisseurs;  
But as a universal sign to man,  
Raise it above the states and ministers  
To show that freedom, called American,  
Is carried for all peoples in our trust.  
My flag is bound by no meridian:  
Its realm is transcendental and august;

It represents the hand of God within  
All creatures of the water and the dust.  
All nations made my flag—the Pole, the Finn,  
The English and the Irish and the Swede;  
The Czech, who found in it his origin,  
The glowing French, who helped to build its creed:  
All nations, north and south, the light, the dark,  
Are in this flag and cannot now secede;  
Nor yet can we, the guardians of the spark,  
Betray their freedom in our own behalf.  
Unless we free those lands this flag will mark  
America as freedom's cenotaph,  
Where faith for all the world was lost, and hope  
Was hauled at dusk forlornly down the staff.  
It is not ours: we cannot bound its scope!  
What we have borrowed we must now return  
To live in earth's revolving envelope  
Which wings surmount and slow propellers churn:  
We must pass back the fire they passed to us,  
That it may freshen and forever burn:  
To those who live among the hideous  
Ruins of fear, revenge, and phobia,

Haunting their fallen hopes—cadaverous,  
 Bereft, and lonely for America—  
 Along the northern sea, or on the Rhone,  
 Or down the sad, majestic Vltava.  
 O priceless flag! Immense and sacred loan  
 From Heaven, which the earth cannot confine!  
 Raised first upon the Ranger's staff, and flown  
 Above the muskets of the Brandywine:  
 Bright shred of Gettysburg and Belleau Wood,  
 Spirit of Tárawa and Kwajalein:  
 Symbol of struggle pitched in brotherhood,  
 And many sovereigns held in unity:  
 Old Glory! Guard the hopeful and the good,  
 And lead us onward, unconfusedly,  
 That in our freedom others may be free!

America is not a land of ease.  
 We cannot live upon this soil enwrapped  
 In the sweet safety of cerulean seas:  
 Our multi-tongued, Hesperian shores are lapped  
 By war and discord, breaking in from time—  
 The mounting swells of human struggle, capped

With envy, hate, rapacity, and crime.  
But ever outward, over all the earth,  
Where deserts wait the skulls, or eagles climb,  
We must put forth the products of our birth;  
Our faith, our laws, the meaning of our will;  
Our aeroplanes to weave a magic girth  
Across the continents, to trade or kill;  
Our bright machines, our medicines, our bread,  
Our tireless vessels, armed or mercantile;  
Our boys, our lovers and our loved; our dead,  
Who mark the beaches of democracy:  
Put forth, not as in conquest, but to spread  
Assurance of a world community,  
From lone Ascension Island's foaming shore,  
Across Uganda, to the ancient sea,  
And on, from Basra, through the eastern door  
With life and labor from the Chesapeake;  
To Prestwick, where the Hornet engines roar  
Like freedom, in from icy Reykjavik;  
To coral isles and Polynesian joy;  
Or through the fog to touch the future's cheek,  
The cold and desolate slopes of Stanovoi.  
Freedom is not an empty word: it springs  
From hands in Arkansas and Illinois.

Its being is in men and thoughts and things  
Forever borne on keels and silver wings.

America lives in her simple homes:  
The weathered door, the old wisteria vine,  
The dusty barnyard where the rooster roams,  
The common trees like elm and oak and pine:  
In furniture for comfort, not for looks,  
In names like Jack and Pete and Caroline,  
In neighbors you can trust, and honest books,  
And peace, and hope, and opportunity.  
She lives like destiny in Mom, who cooks  
On gleaming stoves her special fricassee,  
And jams and cakes and endless apple pies.  
She lives in Pop, the family referee,  
Absorbing Sunday news with heavy eyes;  
And in the dog, and in the shouting kids  
Returning home from school, to memorize  
The history of the ancient pyramids.  
And still she lives in them when darkness wakes  
The distant smells and infinite katydids,  
And valleys seem like black and fearsome lakes  
Guarded by windows of American light,

While in the wind the family maple rakes  
The lucent stars westward across the night.  
And still, however far her sons may go,  
To venture or to die beyond her sight,  
These little windows shine incognito  
Across incredulous humanity;  
That all the peoples of the earth may know  
The embattled destination of the free—  
Not peace, not rest, not pleasure—but to dare  
To face the axiom of democracy:  
Freedom is not to limit, but to share;  
And freedom here is freedom everywhere.





*My Country* was designed by Margaret Evans and Helen Gentry, set in type by Westcott & Thomson, Inc., printed by the Commanday-Roth Company, Inc., and bound by the H. Wolff Book Manufacturing Co., Inc.

